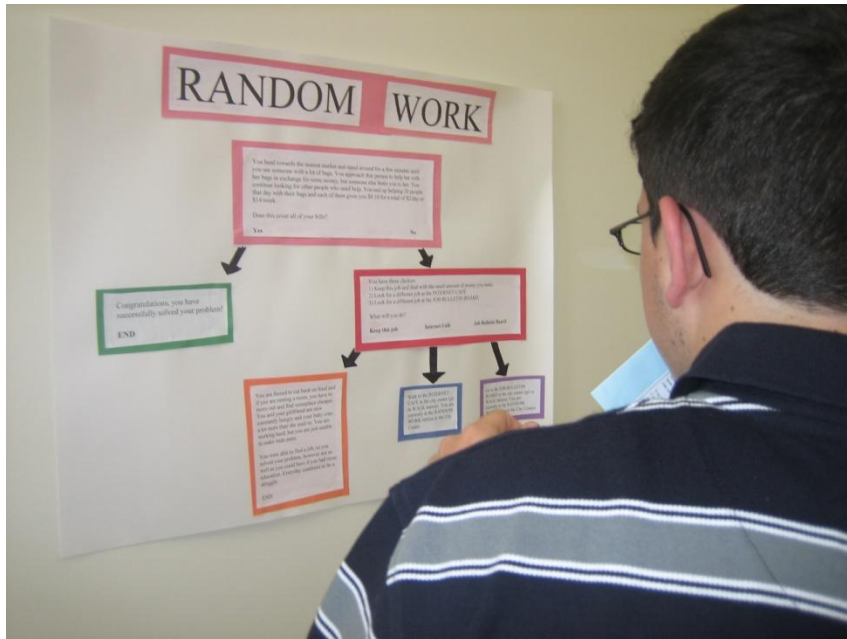

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VOLUNTEER BRINGS STUDENTS IN WASHINGTON FACE-TO-FACE WITH KENYAN POVERTY



June 26, 2009, Washington, DC: "You are sick and it is the weekend. You have a fever and you're sweating and vomiting so you fear you have malaria. You need medical attention. All the money you have is what is in your pocket, a total of \$3.59. You never went to school so you do not know how to read or write. You live in the Kibera slums."

This was one scenario played out Tuesday on a leafy Washington campus, as students in the [summer program](#) at the Washington International School struggled to understand life on the edge for children in Nairobi's notorious slums.

The role-playing game was designed by [Kristina Rosinsky](#), who volunteered through The Advocacy Project (AP) for the [Undugu Society of Kenya](#) last year. Ms Rosinsky started the [Digital Storytelling Project](#) - a blogging workshop for disadvantaged youth - last summer, and continues to promote the project in the US through the interactive game and presentations.

As part of the game, the students were assigned different levels of education and income and asked to confront some of the daily challenges that face young people in Kenya - such as finding a job (shown at right), buying food, going to school, or staying healthy.

"I was a penniless, homeless, starving person on the street," said Thanya Chartsakukahajaru, a

15-year-old student from Bangkok who is taking part in the program. "I had 10 cents and my choices were to go steal food or go to the dumpsite. I stole food...I ended up in jail."

AP is keen to create a connection between Undugu's students in Kenya and young people in the United States, and Ms Rosinsky hopes that the Digital Storytelling Project might offer a way.

Last summer, she helped 12 Kenyan students to [post blogs and photographs](#) describing their experiences living and working on the streets. Only two of her students had used a computer before she arrived, and only one had used a camera. But Ms Rosinsky (shown below, with one of her students) said the kids got used to the technology quickly, and impressed her with their writing.

On Tuesday, the students in Washington were given the opportunity to read and comment on the Kenyan's blogs, and many expressed interest in getting more involved.

"I'm surprised by the violence that's in their lives and the issues they're dealing with, (such as marriage at 14 years old," said Catherine Golub, a 17-year-old student at the Washington International School.

"I think using their perspective is pretty unique," agreed 17-year-old Eric Hsiao, a summer student from Bangkok. "It's not some NGO or some person from a developed country saying, 'This is what's going on.' It's first-person."

The blogging project stalled last year for lack of funding after Ms Rosinsky left Kenya, but was recently reinvigorated when Undugu received a \$7,100 grant. [Barbara Dziedzic](#), one of two [AP Peace Fellows](#) at Undugu this summer, secured an additional \$1,850 grant, and has since purchased two laptops, two digital audio recorders, an external hard drive, and other equipment for the Kenyan students.

AP has recruited two experienced Peace Fellows for Undugu this summer, and both hope to build on Ms Rosinsky's work when they return in the United States. Ms Dziedzic, a teacher at Arundel High School in Maryland, hopes to create an exchange between her own students and the young bloggers in Nairobi. [Alix Sharkey](#), a graduate student at UC San Diego, will be introducing Undugu to high school students in San Diego California, and Lexington, Kentucky.

- Learn more about the [Digital Storytelling Project](#)
- Read the blog of [Kristina Rosinsky](#)
- Read the blogs of 2009 Peace Fellows [Barbara Dziedzic](#) and [Alix Sharkey](#)
- Learn more about the [Undugu Society of Kenya](#)